



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

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STATE OF ILLINOIS RECOGNIZES NATIONAL WOMEN'S SMALL BUSINESS MONTH

SPRINGFIELD – In honor of October's National Women's Small Business Month, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) today announced it will host a series of webinars to support the advancement of women-owned businesses. The discussions scheduled by DCEO and a host of industry partners, including Groupon, will offer support and insights for small businesses to grow, position themselves, and seek out resources that will help them overcome the effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

"While traveling the state on small business walking tours, I have witnessed firsthand the creativity and impact of businesses owned by women in Illinois, with an increasing presence by women of color," **said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton**. "As the chair of the Illinois Council on Women and Girls, I am excited about these seminars being provided by DCEO. They will create networking opportunities and support for women who own small businesses as they meet and hurdle economic challenges brought on by COVID-19 and more."

"Now more than ever before, women-owned small businesses need our support, which is why we are proud to shine a light on their contributions and importance to our communities and to our state's economy during this year's National Women's Small Business Month," **said DCEO Director Erin B. Guthrie**. "Under the Governor's leadership, Illinois has developed bold and equitable resources and programs to offset losses related to COVID-19 facing women-owned and all small businesses statewide. We encourage firms owned by women to join us for a series of seminars that will help them learn from experts and get the support they need to pursue the critical assistance dollars necessary for these challenging times."

"Every one of us has a role to play when it comes to investing in the success of small businesses. It's certainly great to have an entire month and campaign dedicated to the promotion and growth of women-owned businesses, but it's also very important that we continue to support them all year long," **said Groupon CFO Melissa Thomas**. "That is why we are proud to join the state of Illinois in convening a conversation around how we can better support women-owned businesses statewide as they face greater challenges than usual due to the pandemic and they need our help now more than ever."

Events for businesses begin TODAY and are free to join. More information on how to register is found below, or on DCEO's website.

October 8 at 2pm - Empowering Her with Resources during COVID-19 and Civil Unrest

Groupon and the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity will present a session focused on an inclusive business environment and ways to propel the growth of women-owned businesses with government and private sector resources. This conversation will feature opening remarks from Illinois' First Lady, MK Pritzker, DCEO Director Guthrie, Groupon CFO Melissa Thomas, and a keynote from Andrea Zopp, CEO of World Business Chicago. Panelists include: Marianna Markowitz, CEO of the First Women's Bank, Charity Marcus, CEO of Black Women Business Owners of America, and Margot Dorfman, CEO of the U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce, and more.

October 22 at 2 pm - Women Get Involved in Manufacturing

In honor of Women's Small Business Month and Manufacturing Month, this webinar focuses on ways to uplift women in manufacturing roles through the insights of industry leaders. The talk will focus on helping students with a closer look at what it takes to enter the industry. Panelists include: Erin Hallstrom, Influential Women in Manufacturing, Annie Mouhaupt, Owner of Moho and Melissa Lederer, Owner of MHUB, and more.

Various Dates - All in for Women: BIG Webinars

The DCEO Office of Minority Economic Empowerment (OMEE) will host a seminar on the Business Interruption Grant Program (BIG). In this webinar, women owned businesses will learn about eligibility, program details, and the application process. Technical assistance support will also be provided for the last 30 minutes of every session. Workshops on BIG will take place on the following dates:

1. Tuesday, October 6, 2020 2:00 p.m.
2. Saturday, October 10, 2020 10:00 a.m.
3. Tuesday, October 20, 2020 2:00 p.m.
4. Tuesday, October 27, 2:00 p.m.

Throughout the pandemic, small and women-owned businesses have been particularly vulnerable to the financial impacts created by COVID-19. The Pritzker administration has worked closely with industry leaders to understand the impact of the ongoing crisis and to develop economic relief programs that prioritize gender and racial equity. At the center of this COVID-19 support provided by the state, the Governor's Business Interruption Grants (BIG) program, has already deployed nearly \$20 million for women-owned businesses and entrepreneurs, on top of over \$150 million provided for childcare provider businesses statewide, largely owned by women. A \$220 million second round of BIG funding is now active. For more information on how to apply today please visit [DCEO's website](#).

For more information on National Women's Small Business Month events planned for businesses, contact Ibrie Hart, Women's Business Development Manager, at ibrie.hart@illinois.gov. To learn more about ongoing resources and programs for businesses, follow DCEO on social media @IllinoisDCEO or sign up to receive the newsletter.

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